

HISTORY OF THE MERRILLVILLE HIGH SCHOOL 1956MERRILLVILLE
Schools

The Merrillville High School had its beginning in the year 1896. At that time, Dr. H. L. Iddings, the trustee, saw the need for higher education. Through the efforts of Dr. Iddings, working in cooperation with County Supt. Cooper, Mr. Locke was secured as a grade school teacher with the understanding that he was to teach high school branches also to those who wished to continue their education.

The first class consisted of Alta Halstead, Christina Lennertz, and Cora Pierce. The first classes were conducted in a somewhat different manner from those of today. The pupils were allowed to progress as rapidly as they were able. In some instances, practically two years of work was covered in one.

It might be of interest to know what became of this first class; Miss Pierce became a music teacher, Miss Lennertz and Miss Halstead became school teachers. Miss Lennertz taught four years and Miss Halstead some years longer. After she stopped teaching, Miss Halstead took up the study of law and was admitted to the bar, being the fourth woman in Lake County and the first woman to be admitted on examination up to that time. She practiced law in Hobart, Indiana.

This first class proved the need for higher education and the success achieved by these three students, working under the handicaps of those days, should be an inspiration to the students of modern times.

The high school was conducted along the same lines with Mr. Kay as teacher, with equal success for several years. It became so successful that it was an inspiration to Mr. F. M. Pierce, the trustee, and to the community in general. They realized that in order to do the quality of work which was in keeping with the times, more room and better equipment was needed. Consequently, Mr. Pierce had plans drawn and a new building erected in the year 1901.

At this time, Mr. Morey was secured to take charge of the high school in the new building, where he conducted the freshman and sophomore classes for two years. The true worth of our high school was proved at this time by Inez Burge, a member of one of our early classes, who graduated from the Crown Point High School as valedictorian.

Following Mr. Morey, Mr. Quillen conducted the high school for two years giving a three year course. One of Mr. Quillen's pupils, Mr. Floyd Demmon, became an attorney in Hobart, Indiana, and deputy prosecutor.

Mr. O. A. Cassidy was employed to succeed Mr. Quillen, for the following year. The school dropped back to a one year high school course, the teacher dividing his time with the upper grade teacher.

In 1906, Charles I. Goodpaster took charge of the school and continued as principal until 1913. It was during Mr. Goodpaster's principalship that the school was first accredited. In 1907-1908, Mr. Goodpaster added another year to the high school course, giving all the instruction himself. He worked very hard to do this, hampered as he was by lack of time and equipment. Two more students brought credit to Merrillville. Eva Burge graduated from as valedictorian from Crown Point in 1910 and in 1914, Vida Pierce graduated from the Gary High School as her class valedictorian.

Jennie Elmore taught the high school for the next three years with the exception of a few months, when, owing to illness, her place was filled by Zerzes Sulver. In 1918-1919 two high schools were conducted in Ross Township; Miss Elmore taught at Merrillville and Miss Olive Wood taught at Ainsworth.

In 1921-1922, Harry B. Calpha taught the Merrillville High School and Miss Wood taught at Ainsworth. Attendance was very small at both schools. In 1922-1923, Richard Nuzum and Miss Wood taught at Merrillville and Ainsworth respectively. The following year, the trustee, Mr. Roy Hack, consolidated the two high schools at Merrillville. Mr. O.K. Appleman was secured as principal and Miss Wood was retained as assistant.

In 1924-1925 Mr. Hack instituted a complete commercial course including shorthand, typewriting, and bookkeeping. Miss Verda Zuschnitt was secured to teach this department, with Mr. Appleman and Miss Wood filling the position they held the previous year. This year marked the largest increase in attendance since the establishment of the school.

In 1924-1925 a complete commercial course taught by Miss Verda Zuschnitt was offered. Mr. Appleman and Miss Wood held their previous positions. This year broke attendance records and during the summer the class rooms were re-arranged to provide more space.

In 1925-1926 the high school was fully commissioned. Mr. O.K. Appleman retained the position of principal and math and science teacher. Mr. Caughey Naylor taught English and History. Mrs. Helen Swinford taught commercial branches and domestic science, and Mr. J.E. Lucas was principal of the junior high and athletic director.

The following year, Mr. T.D. Fox became principal and science teacher. Miss Scott taught English and math. Mr. Teagle taught the commercial subjects and history, and was in charge of athletics. Mr. Lucas remained principal of the junior high and Miss Vada McPherson was the supervisor of music. A vocational agriculture course was offered beginning this year. An orchestra consisting of seventeen pieces was also organized under the instruction of Miss McPherson. A PTA was organized during the first part of the school year. Much interest was shown by the entire community. Mr. Sievert became the new trustee. Under his leadership, great plans were made for the future.

With the completion of the new school building, the upper six grades moved into it, leaving the lower six grades with the use of the entire old building. Everything pointed to a bright future for Merrillville High School. The new school, with its additional facilities, provided for physical education, home economics, industrial arts, and music, was in use only one year when it burned in 1928.

Under the supervision of Mr. Sievert, a new school was built which provided the same facilities as were in the old building. During construction, portables were erected to accommodate the students until the building was ready.

Mr. T.D. Fox assumed the role of principal of the new seventeen room school building, which held a continuous commission by the State Department and accommodated ninety-seven high school pupils from grades 9 - 12. This position was held by Mr. Fox until 1931, when Mr. Raymond Lemmel assumed principalship of the school.

Merrillville and vicinity was a growing community and each year brought new faces. Mr. Lemmel, Mr. Emil Buchfuhrer, trustee, and his advisory board were ever alert to provide additional facilities to strengthen the departments and enrich the curriculum. Mr. Lemmel was principal until May 1939. During this period, the enrollment ranged from 110 in 1931 to 188 in 1939.

Mr. Claud York assumed the principalship in Sept., 1939 with Mr. Holmes, the new trustee. They were keenly aware of their responsibilities to provide education for all Ross Township youth. In view of the increased enrollment, they were faced with the first building project in more than a decade.

In 1943, the first addition to the present high school was completed. This addition provided additional facilities for vocational agriculture, home economics, shop, cafeteria, and business education. In spite of these additional facilities, the school could rate no more than a continuous commission in the eyes of the State Department. In view of this fact, and the ever increasing enrollment, it was obvious that within another decade additional facilities would be needed.

Mr. Edgar L. Miller, assumed the principalship in the fall of 1947. Mr. Houchin, the new trustee, and his advisory board, made every effort to provide facilities to meet the needs of the youth. With this in mind and in view of the ever increasing enrollment, plans were made to add the third addition. With the completion of this addition, which added facilities in the special area fields, a first class commission was received for Merrillville High School.

Mr. Henry Fieler, the new trustee, and the advisory board, took their offices January, 1951. Again, these men were ever alert to see that adequate facilities were provided. The administration, with the help of the trustee, faculty, and community, secured membership in the North Central Association of Secondary Schools and Colleges for Merrillville High School in 1953.

Early in the year of 1952 the administration began to view the township enrollment and make predictions as to what would be needed to adequately provide for the youth of this fast growing area. The outcome of this study resulted in a new high school, which was constructed during 1954 and used for the first time during the school year 1955-1956. An addition consisting of a physical education plant, two class rooms and an art department is now under construction. This school plant is located on a thirty acre tract, approximately three blocks north and one block east of the old high school building. The new plant will accommodate about 900 students, and will lend itself to expansion of the various departments.

During the past twenty years, there has been an active PTA as well as an active Band Boosters Association. The music department, and athletic department, as well as many graduating seniors have brought great honors to themselves as well as the school. Graduation classes ranged from 39 in 1939 to 122 in 1956. The enrollment for the school year 1956-1957 as of Sept. 12, was 612.

Byrs - " 1970-71, enrollment 7,295
later

Merrillville H.S. organized 1914-15 2 Yr. H.S.
" " commissioned 1925 4 Yr. H.S.
" " joined Lake Co. H.S. Asso. 1925

Buildings housing H.S.

Years used

1/2 block W. of 53 - Rt. 330

4 years

New H.S. building

1 yr. Burned 1928

Building same site

25 yrs.

New bldg. present site occupied in 1955

2 additions made since - 2nd under construction

No. of H.S. graduates:

| | | | | | |
|-------------|---|-----------|-------------|---|------------|
| <u>1926</u> | - | <u>4</u> | <u>'44</u> | - | <u>45</u> |
| <u>'27</u> | - | <u>5</u> | <u>'45</u> | - | <u>46</u> |
| <u>'28</u> | - | <u>12</u> | <u>'46</u> | - | <u>68</u> |
| <u>'29</u> | - | <u>10</u> | <u>'47</u> | - | <u>58</u> |
| <u>'30</u> | - | <u>19</u> | <u>'48</u> | - | <u>68</u> |
| <u>'31</u> | - | <u>15</u> | <u>'49</u> | - | <u>79</u> |
| <u>'32</u> | - | <u>22</u> | <u>'50</u> | - | <u>88</u> |
| <u>'33</u> | - | <u>20</u> | <u>'51</u> | - | <u>67</u> |
| <u>'34</u> | - | <u>22</u> | <u>'52</u> | - | <u>71</u> |
| <u>'35</u> | - | <u>29</u> | <u>'53</u> | - | <u>73</u> |
| <u>'36</u> | - | <u>29</u> | <u>'54</u> | - | <u>91</u> |
| <u>'37</u> | - | <u>15</u> | <u>'55</u> | - | <u>91</u> |
| <u>'38</u> | - | <u>24</u> | <u>1969</u> | - | <u>360</u> |
| <u>'39</u> | - | <u>34</u> | | | |
| <u>'40</u> | - | <u>38</u> | | | |
| <u>'41</u> | - | <u>42</u> | | | |
| <u>'42</u> | - | <u>34</u> | | | |
| <u>'43</u> | - | <u>48</u> | | | |

Class enrollments: Ross Twp.

1922-23

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|
| Grade | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | — | — |
| No. Enrolled | 35 | 32 | 31 | 24 | 33 | 33 | 37 | 27 | 14 | 7 | — | — |

1923-24

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|
| Grade | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | — | — |
| No. | 23 | 25 | 25 | 34 | 19 | 29 | 38 | 25 | 19 | 10 | — | — |

1924-25

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|---|
| Grade | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | — |
| No. | 45 | 31 | 36 | 33 | 30 | 25 | 33 | 30 | 23 | 19 | 8 | — |

1925-26

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Grade | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| No. | 33 | 45 | 30 | 32 | 34 | 30 | 23 | 25 | 22 | 20 | 7 | 4 |

1926-27

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|
| Grade | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| No. | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | — | 25 | 17 | 10 | 5 |

1927-28

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Grade | — | — | — | — | — | — | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| No. | — | — | — | — | — | — | 18 | 16 | 19 | 21 | 13 | 12 |